

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 *IO-14 ISO-00 EUR-25 DRC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 251115Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1293

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0457

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: COALITION DISCUSSIONS HIT SNAG ON WHO IS A JEW

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

REF: TEL AVIV 0295

1. WHO IS A JEW CONTROVERSY EMERGED MORE SHARPLY THIS PAST WEEK AS OBSTACLE IN FORMING NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT.

2. NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY LEADERS PUBLICLY HAVE HELD FIRM TO DEMAND THAT NEW GOVERNMENT MUST AGREE THAT ONLY CONVERSIONS BY ORTHODOX RABBIS BE RECOGNIZED IN GRANTING RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP TO IMMIGRANTS. LABOR ALIGNMENT HAS REITERATED ITS OPPOSITION TO CHANGE IN STATUS QUO ON RELIGIOUS MATTERS. FINMIN SAPIR, HEADING COALITION TALKS FOR ALIGNMENT, REPORTEDLY THREATENED NRP WITH NEW ELECTIONS RATHER THAN YIELDING ON CONTROVERSIAL RELIGIOUS ISSUE. LABOR ALIGNMENT OBJECTIONS DERIVE FROM WIDESPREAD PUBLIC SENTIMENT IN ISRAEL AGAINST

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STRENGTHENING ROLE OF ORTHODOX RABBINATE IN MATTERS OF PERSONAL

STATUS AS WELL AS CONCERN OF WORLD JEWRY OVER RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION OF WHO IS A JEW.

3. IMPASSE ON RELIGIOUS ISSUE HAS LED TO INCREASED SPECULATION IN PRESS THAT COALITION GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE INITIALLY ESTABLISHED ON RESTRICTED BASIS OF LABOR ALIGNMENT (INCLUDING ARABS), INDEPENDENT LIBERALS AND CITIZENS RIGHTS LIST, HAVING ONE-VOTE MAJORITY IN KNESSET. HOWEVER, MRS MEIR IS KNOWN TO BE OPPOSED TO BRINGING SHULAMIT ALONI'S GROUP INTO CABINET, AND, IN ADDITION, IT WOULD BE DISCOMFORTING FOR MAJORITY TO BE DEPENDENT ON ARAB VOTES.

4. WE INTERPRET LABOR ALIGNMENT THREATS OF HOLDING NEW ELECTIONS OR FORMING COALITION GOVERNMENT EXCLUDING NRP AS PRESSURE TACTICS TO BRING NRP INTO ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE PERMITTING RE-ESTABLISHMENT FORMER COALITION PARTNERSHIP. NEXT TWO WEEKS WILL BE CRITICAL, AS PRESIDENT KATZIR WILL FORMALLY ASK MRS MEIR ON SUNDAY TO UNDERTAKE FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. DESPITE APPARENT DIFFICULTIES, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT A SOLUTION WILL BE FOUND OUT OF THE IMPASSE, AVOIDING RECOURSE TO NEW ELECTIONS AT THIS TIME.
KEATING

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